



Toxic Air Pollutants Fact Sheet



What are they?

Toxic air pollutants (TAPs) are many different air pollutants that have or are thought to have caused serious health and environmental effects. They can exist in the forms of particulate matter or as gases. Some examples of TAPs are arsenic, asbestos, benzene, vinyl chloride, mercury, chromium, toluene, chlorofluorocarbons (CFC's), radon, and beryllium.

Where do they come from?

Toxic air pollutants can come from many different places including:

- Natural events (forest fires, volcanoes)
- Mobile sources (cars, vans, trucks, buses)
- Industries (factories, refineries, power plants, etc...)
- Household items (lead paint, certain cleaning products, pesticides, fluorescent lights, fire extinguishers, plastic foam products, plumbing pipes)
- Small businesses (dry cleaners, print shops)

What are the health effects of toxic air pollutants?

- Increased risk of cancer
- Poisoning
- Difficulty breathing
- Immune system damage
- Increased risk of serious illnesses
- Increased risk of death

What are the environmental effects of toxic air pollutants?

- Breakdown of the stratospheric "good" ozone layer
- Destruction of plant and animal production cycles
- Build-up over time of large amounts of toxic substances in animals that can be harmful to the animal or to people who may eat the animal (e.g. mercury in fish)

How can you protect yourself and the environment from toxic air pollutants?

- Don't use aerosol spray cans that contain CFCs
- Don't breathe in household cleaning products
- Don't buy compounds that contain mercury substances

